



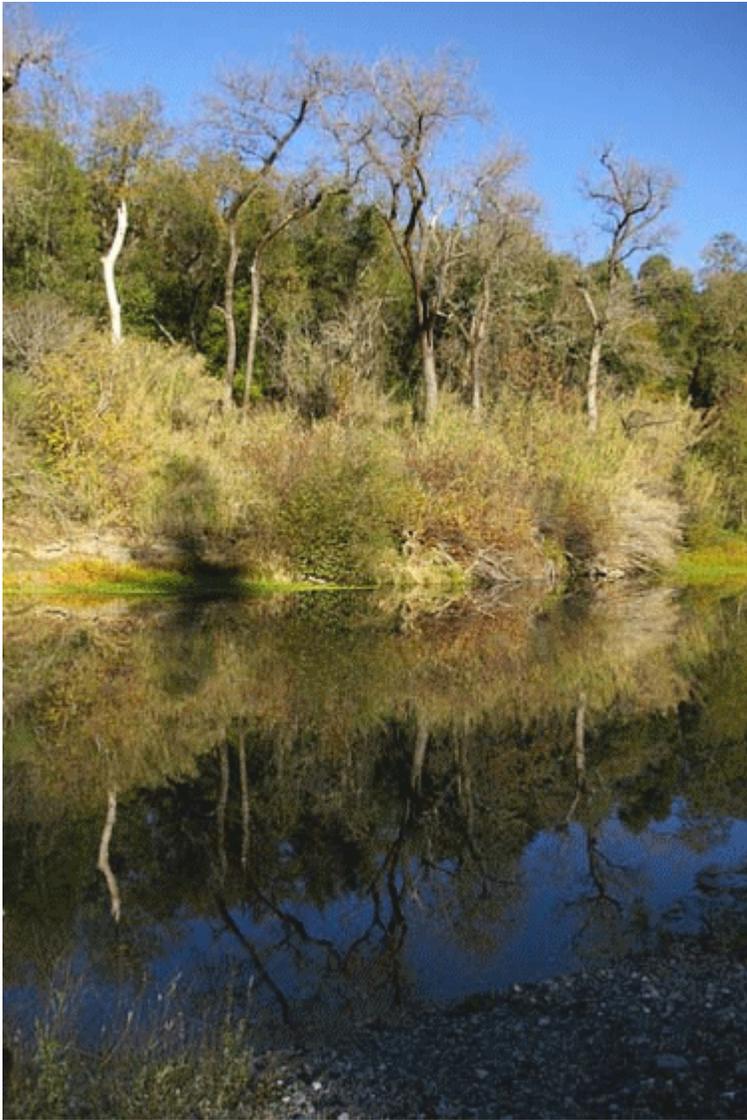
# E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE



December  2007

(Available each month to Tile Heritage members who e-mail the Foundation from the address they would like E-News sent to. Contact: [foundation@tileheritage.org](mailto:foundation@tileheritage.org))

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The Russian River at Tile Heritage,  
Thanksgiving Day 2007  
Photo by Travis Hiner

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**Tile Heritage Commemorative  
by Fitz Tile, 2007**

## **Fitz Tile Creates Unique Commemorative**

Chuck Fitzgerald of Fitz Tile in El Cajon, California has designed a commemorative tile for the Tile Heritage Foundation. Dated 2007 each tile presents the Tile Heritage logo embraced by the human hand. The muted glaze treatment enhances the hand-molded piece that is designed to hang (as shown) on a vertical surface.

Chuck is a third generation tile designer and setter who has been making tiles by hand for the past 15 years. He specializes in the design and manufacture of interlocking geometric shapes and sizes for both residential and commercial use. Visit his website at [www.fitztile.com](http://www.fitztile.com).

Over the past 20 years a select group of artists have designed and produced commemorative tiles for Tile Heritage. In the early years, as the Foundation was building its membership base, the annual tiles were given away free to members. At some point in the mid-1990s

this became impractical, as there were too many members to serve. At that point the decision was made to offer the tiles for sale, which provided Tile Heritage with the opportunity for a fundraiser as well as the funds to reimburse the tile makers for their work.

A special Tile Heritage salute to Chuck Fitzgerald, whose pride of membership is reflected in this unique commemorative design. The 2007 tile may be purchased from Tile Heritage. Price: \$45 (apply your member discount!), add 7.75% sales tax for California residents, plus \$8 for Priority mail.

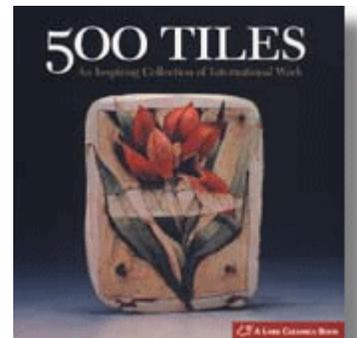
## **500 Tiles: An Inspiring Collection of International Work**

**500 Tiles**, the most recent addition to Lark Ceramics Books, presents 500 handmade clay tiles from a juried collection selected by tile artist, **Angelica Pozo**, author of ***Making & Installing Handmade Tiles***. All of the entries are essentially decorative in nature, from relief work to mosaics, and represent the many ways that artists can interpret a basic element.

"Perhaps it is because the 'tile,' by definition, has such minimal requirements," postulates Ms. Pozo, "that artists have been attracted to making tile in the first place. I'm convinced that the tile truly must be the perfect universal vehicle for artistic expression in clay."

This book is a must for everyone who loves tile! Within its 420 pages the sweeping survey of contemporary work will serve as an inspiration to both beginners and professional tile makers as well as collectors and anyone who appreciates fine craftsmanship.

In stock and priced at \$24.95 (plus \$6 for shipping/handling and 7.75% sales tax for CA residents), you may choose to support Tile Heritage by ordering the book now!





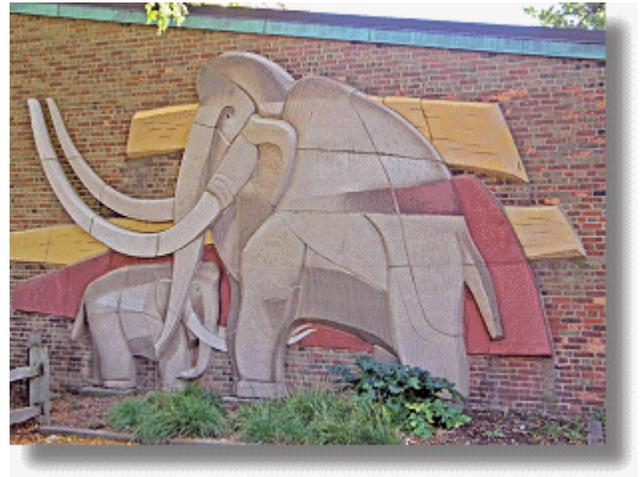
**Tile by Viktor Schreckengost,  
Cleveland Metropark Zoo, mid-1950s.**

## Ohio Factory Tour

Mid-October found sixteen tile 'fanatics' cruising through the state of Ohio, luxuriating on our bus (more like a limosine!), for the planned THF tour of tile factories and studios. Joe Taylor and I flew into Canton in advance, and on our first day we took a foray north, before the official tour, to Cleveland, specifically to visit the zoo.

## Elephants in Cleveland

Our destination was the Elephant House at the **Cleveland Metroparks Zoo**, home to the sculptural work of **Viktor Schreckengost**, the renowned artist, sculptor, designer and musician. Born in 1906 he's now 101 years young and is celebrated and feted for his contributions and accomplishments. The elephant sculptures were commissioned in the mid-1950s. In addition to these massive wall sculptures he also designed tiles for the zoo's aviary that has since been razed. The tiles have been preserved and moved to an interpretive area in the zoo's information building.



**Mural work by Viktor Schreckengost,  
Cleveland Metropark Zoo, 1955.**



**Exhibit of Cowan pottery and tiles,  
Rocky River Library**

## Cowan at Rocky River Library

Later in the day, on a recommendation from longtime THF member **Nancy McCroskey**, we made our way to another unique venue, this one just west of Cleveland-the recently renovated **Rocky River Library**, which houses the **Cowan Pottery Museum**. **R. Guy Cowan** founded the **Cowan Pottery Studio** in Lakewood, Ohio (a suburb of Cleveland) in 1912. He was born in 1884 in East Liverpool, Ohio and educated in ceramics at the **New York State School of Ceramics at Alfred**. In 1920, he moved his facility a few miles west to Rocky River. Over the years the pottery developed a full commercial line of artistic pottery, including tiles, all of



**Batchelder-Wilson mantel,  
Rocky River Library  
mid-1920s.**

the highest quality. Many well-known artists, including **Viktor Schreckengost**, became affiliated with the studio; and through these artists and their works, American ceramic art gained the respect and recognition it deserved from the art world. Exhibits of Cowan pottery are located throughout the library, representing a cultural heritage unique to the Rocky River community. Our visit was further enhanced by finding a fabulous **Batchelder** fireplace mantel in one of the library's reading rooms, part of the original library building. What a fine start to our Ohio tour! Visit [www.cowanpottery.org](http://www.cowanpottery.org)



## Planing Shale at Summitville

Monday morning, October 15th we were all on the, together for the first time-a coach like no other with white leather lounge seats, illuminated mirrors and a couple of icy fridges to boot! We headed east through the lovely countryside to **Summitville Tiles** where we were greeted by **Dave Johnson**, the president of the company. The Summitville story dates back to 1912 when shale and clay were dug by steam shovel, when beehive kilns were loaded by hand and fired by coal and when the offices of the **Summit Brick Company** were housed in the old abandoned C & P Railroad Station. This year, 2007, is **Summitville's 95th**

**birthday**. One of the nation's oldest continuously operating tile manufacturers, Summitville is the only surviving charter member of the industry's national trade association, the **Tile Council of North America**.

Our plant tour started with a visit to one of the company's shale quarries where the raw materials for their pavers and tiles are mined. What a fascinating experience! In the quarry bed we met the other-worldly machinery known as a **shale planer**, a device that looks like something from a Star Wars film that has an 'appetite' for grazing on the vertical fascia of the shale quarry walls. The shale is harvested in this way and then trucked to the manufacturing plant in Minerva. Dave told us that over the last century Summitville has operated its shale harvesting operation in an eco-responsible way. On our journey to the tile plant he pointed out local terrain, owned by Summitville, both wooded and meadowland, totally restored, land that was once open-face shale pits like the one we visited. This sensitivity to the environment and voluntary restoration over such a long period of time is not common even today where more stringent parameters for raw material extraction are being set. **Kudos to Summitville Tiles!** See [www.summitville.com](http://www.summitville.com).



**They got on the bus with us!  
Electrum Limosine's finest!**



**In the pit, smiling, from left to right: Pat McGarry Evanko, Jody Yelland, Donna Billick, Jim Evanko, Nawal Motawi, Sheila Menzies, Lindsay McLean, Susan Meacham, Joe Taylor, Susan Martin, Dave Johnson, Mike Sims, Tom Gelsanlitter, Brenda Lusher, Karim Motawi, Andru Eron, Chuck Fitzgerald.**



Hey, that was a fabulous luncheon!  
Thanks Dave!  
Photo by Jody Yelland.  
Photo by Jody Yelland

We then toured the tile plant in Minerva where quarry tiles, thin brick and Summitville's unique product, Strata, are produced. **Strata** is the commercial floor tile that looks like wood that we see in fast food restaurants. The grand finale of our morning was enjoying lunch at the historic **Spread Eagle Tavern** in Hanoverton that dates back to the canal era of the early 19th century when the village was a bustling stop on the Sandy & Beaver Canal. Erected in 1837, the three-story Federal Period brick tavern served as a hostelry for many a weary

traveler and for the townsfolk. Today, more than 150 years later... and after an extensive two-year restoration by Dave's parents, **Peter and Jean Johnson...** the **Spread Eagle Tavern** has become an Ohio landmark.



Even the planer got distracted!  
Leathers in a shale pit?  
Photo by Jody Yelland

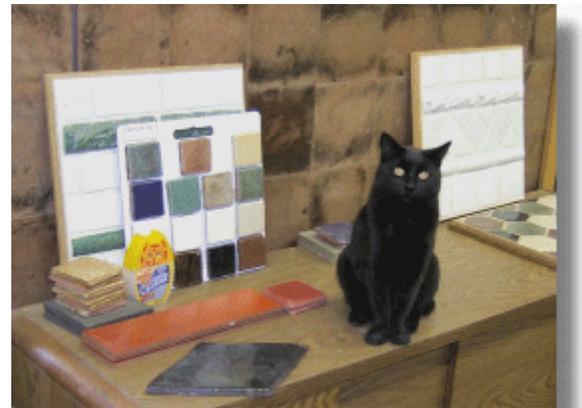


Connie and Pete Keplinger,  
our hosts at Kepcor.

### Friends at Kepcor

After lunch we were on the bus headed back to Minerva to visit **Kepcor**, not far from the Summitville plant. Our hosts were owners **Connie and Pete Keplinger**. Their factory is located in the building that used to house **Structural Stoneware**, a glazed brick and tile company that got underway in the mid-60s and operated successfully for roughly 20 years. Today Connie and Pete, one of Stoneware's founders, manufacture glazed floor and wall tile and structural clay tile using hand-molding methods, local

clays and shales similar to what we saw at Summitville. The scale of the Kepcor factory was intimate by comparison. Our hosts were most generous with their time demonstrating for us their forming and firing practices and explaining how and where their materials are marketed.



"May I help you?"  
the receptionist at Kepcor.  
Photo by Andru Eron

## Ironrock's Tiles and Bricks

Tuesday the 16th was another bright morning as we headed, this time to Ironrock, southeast of downtown Canton. The factory is home to **MetroBrick**, **Metropolitan Ceramics** and the **Meredith Collection**, all of which fit neatly under the umbrella of Ironrock, makers of bricks and tiles since 1866! Our host, **Guy Renkert**, the company's president, affirmed the commitment of five generations of his family to consistently produce high quality ceramic products.



A lasting touch at The Meredith Collection.

[www.ironrock.com](http://www.ironrock.com).

**Metropolitan** is the largest manufacturer of quarry tile in America today. In addition, the **Meredith Collection** of handcrafted tiles come in a myriad of molded and glazed forms.

Guy and **Roy Gorton**, Senior VP of Operations at **Ironrock**, were our informative tour guides. The factory is superbly modern, clean, efficient and run with great appreciation for recycling, reclaiming and reusing materials, making for an eco-friendly environment. Our hosts patiently answered our questions as we followed the process of all the different products being manufactured from the raw material, through forming, firing, finishing, quality control and boxing, ready to ship. We saw a wonderful array of quarry tiles and pavers as well as the hand-carved and hand-painted **Meredith Collection** art tiles and the lovely Victorian-style **Irongate** tiles. See



**Fridays in Akron**  
(before the lunch crowd arrives!)

## Stan Hywet Hall

After a substantial lunch (is there any other kind in Ohio?) at a fine local establishment we headed north to Akron to visit **Stan Hywet Hall**, a National Historic Landmark. The 65-room Tudor-style mansion was built in 1912 by **Goodyear Rubber Company** founder, **F.A. Seiberling and his wife Gertrude**. Stan Hywet, designed by Cleveland architect, **Charles Sumner Schneider**, is named for the Old English words for "hewn stone," not after a person as is commonly believed. The mansion and elaborate gardens are open to the public. We met with curator **Laurie Gilles** for a lively discussion concerning the tile installations found throughout the mansion on fireplaces, in bathrooms and kitchens as well as in the large swimming pool located in the basement of the home. We had free rein in both the house and the gardens with plenty of time to admire the fine woodwork, textiles, furnishings and exceptional landscaping. We hope at some point to share some pictures with you; alas, photography was not allowed in the house. Rain in the late afternoon had us scampering for cover. The bookshop and gift store provided a reprieve from the weather and an opportunity to shop—a prerequisite for THF tours! For more information: [www.stanhywet.org](http://www.stanhywet.org).





## Superior Clay

**Superior Clay** in Uhrichsville was our Wednesday morning destination. Built more than 100 years ago, Superior's plant has been continuously operating ever since. The company has long been

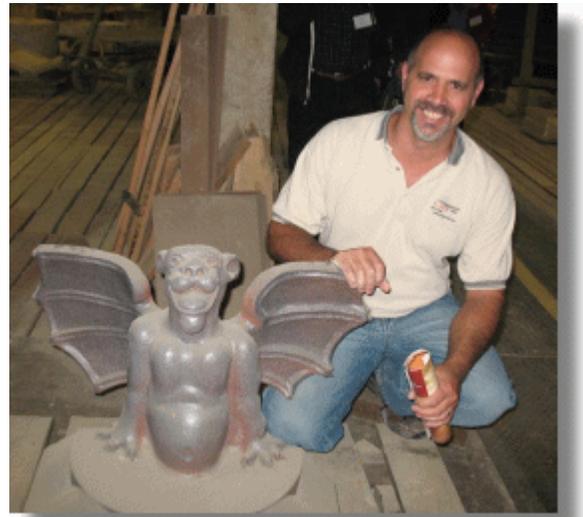
known for a wide variety of high quality clay products; we were all intrigued by the scope. Our guide was **Dana Martini**, and we followed him through a maze of nooks and crannies, upstairs and down of this historic clay factory observing the craftspeople at work preparing clay, filling massive molds and wrestling with

some of the finished pieces. Superior makes fire brick, clay fireplace components, ornate architectural terra cotta elements, elegant chimney pots, pipe, clay ovens and even wine storage systems – all of it beautiful!



The yard at Superior was showered by rain brightening the reds and golds of the stacked pipe and chimney pots, leaving the fabulous beehive kilns glistening in the soft light. These old kilns are no longer in use but offer a picturesque backdrop to the factory and all the finished ware in storage.

[www.superiorclay.com](http://www.superiorclay.com)



**Dana Martini with friend.**

We enjoyed our welcome and our luncheon at **Joe Berni's Deli** followed by a side trip to the **Union Cemetery**. Dana had explained that for about 100 years workers from Superior Clay had used the large extrusions of clay pipe to carve unusual tree-like grave markers for loved ones and colleagues. With a little research we found that similar markers have been made by the Woodman Society and can be found in other parts of the country. However, these are generally carved in stone and have the Woodman insignia carved on them. The clay pipe markers at Union Cemetery had the names and dates of the deceased but no special insignia. It remains a bit of a mystery, another piece of Americana experienced on route.



**Typical grave marker in Union Cemetery.**

*Photo by Susan Martin.*



**Check out the handmade roof tiles!**

## Stepping Back in Zoar

On Wednesday afternoon we stopped in the township of **Zoar** founded by German religious dissenters in 1817 as a communal society. Called the Society of Separatists of Zoar, the people built homes, a grist mill, a dairy, a bakery and even a tile plant to make terra cotta roof tiles for their dwellings. Our host and community guide, **Chuck Knaack**, toured us through the local museum and several of the restored buildings that are generally staffed with costumed interpreters and furnished with items made or used by the historic Zoar community. Today Zoar is an island of Old World charm—a village-sized museum! Many of the German-style structures built by the Zoarites are open to

the public as Zoar Village State Memorial. Others, privately-owned, serve as residences, shops, restaurants and bed and breakfast inns. It was a pleasure to step back in time. For more go to [ohsweb.ohiohistory.org](http://ohsweb.ohiohistory.org).

## Dazed at Belden Brick

A rainy Thursday morning found us at our next tour destination, **Belden Brick Company** in Sugarcreek south of Canton. We



**I know the smoke's got to go somewhere...**

were greeted by our hosts, **Bob Belden**, **Lauren Gonser** and **Larry Di Girolamo**. Bob, a fourth generation Belden brick maker, is president of the company. Having such well-informed guides made our tour most memorable.



**Bob Belden affirms that a brick is just about this size...**

Looking around we saw immediately that the brick plant was massive – acres of it! The company is 120 years old and actually has seven plants (six tunnel kiln plants; one periodic and at Sugarcreek, twenty-three downdraft beehive kilns as well.) All the plants are natural gas equipped, with a related capacity of 225,000,000 brick equivalent annually – massive indeed! Sugarcreek is one of the seven plants.

Initially, we watched as bricks were made the old-fashioned way, extruded, and then sorted by hand. The historic, brick beehive kilns were of special interest as they were hand-loaded with unfired bricks and unloaded in the same way five days later, by hand—an astonishing amount of labor.



**Oops! I just dropped my watch!**

We then moved to one of the more modern facilities, first hiking up catwalks to the top of the plant where raw materials, shale and clay were trucked into the giant maws of the grinding equipment. It was by far the noisiest location, mesmerizing but deafening! Unlike the shale we had seen ‘planed’ to a small size right in the quarry at the Summitville site, this material was big, bolder-sized, and



**Jim (black hat at left) debates coming out of retirement.**

larger. The grinders pulverized everything in their grasp and this raw material then moved down the conveyors to be sifted and then further where other minerals were added to enhance and formulate the proper clay body. Water was added and the clay was ready for extrusion. Much of this factory was mechanized with extruders and brick cutters, conveyors and even robots, but there was a large amount of handwork and a labor force of craftspeople perfecting the product along the way. Dazed by the sheer volume and movement of machine-made bricks from one area of the plant to the other, we followed the material all the way to the kilns and then to the automated sorting and packing sheds. In all, I think we walked 2-3 miles around the plant during our 4-hour visit. Certainly we were well dusted with clay and had an



**Pick a color, any color!**  
Photo by Andru Eron.



**Mass production at its best.**



Every Belden brick is marked with the year it was made (07) and the clay formula used (42).

unforgettable experience! Belden makes bricks in a myriad of shapes, forms and colors; their versatility and the fine quality of the products have placed them in the position of being an important leader in the industry today. Through their dedication to sound technology and ecological production practices their material also qualifies for **The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System**, which encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices. Visit [www.beldenbrick.com](http://www.beldenbrick.com).



Wayne County Courthouse, Wooster, Ohio

Executive Director of **Tile Council of North America (TCNA)**. Brigid & Eric met us upon arrival—they had a tile tour of Wooster all planned. Wooster itself is a charming place; in fact, Ohio Magazine voted Wooster one of Ohio's best hometowns in 2007! Our first stop was **Cornerstone Elementary School**, lovely



Joe Taylor poses "At the Water's Edge."  
Photo by Susan Martin

## Artfind Feast

After a lunch stop in a traditional Amish Country restaurant we headed for Wooster. The rain had stopped and the sun was shining once again. Our destination was **Artfind Tile**, the design studio, gallery and high-end tile showroom of **Brigid O'Connor**, who along with her husband **Eric Astrachan**, founded the business in the early 1990s. Currently Brigid is the monarch of the town, the Queen of Tile, and Eric is a 'commuter' to Anderson, South Carolina, where he serves as the

Executive Director of **Tile Council of North America (TCNA)**. Brigid & Eric met us upon arrival—they had a tile tour of Wooster all planned. Wooster itself is a charming place; in fact, Ohio Magazine voted Wooster one of Ohio's best hometowns in 2007! Our first stop was **Cornerstone Elementary School**, lovely historic building that had been recently saved from the wrecking ball by a well-organized community group that Brigid & Eric were closely involved with. In the interior we found examples of Brigid's artwork gracing the drinking fountains—a donation in honor of the school's restoration. Next stop was close by at **Christmas Run Park**, which houses a local swimming pool. In the clubhouse we found a lovely 24" diameter ship medallion made by the Mosaic Tile Company as well as a wall of Artfind's tropical fish tiles behind the reception desk. We then drove to **Wooster High School**, a relatively new school with a large natatorium adorned with two large wall murals, "At the Water's Edge," representing the natural world in the surrounding community. Both were designed by Brigid, fabricated in China, and donated by the couple to the school. Before returning to the Artfind



Mural by Brigid O'Connor at Cornerstone Elementary



Joe Taylor poses "At the Water's Edge."  
Photo by Susan Martin

Brigid and Eric pulled out all the stops at Artfind. While touring their beautifully restored showroom we stopped by the recently dedicated **Wayne County Public Library**, today a 'state of the art' library and a most welcoming environment for young and old alike. Brigid's murals enliven the entryway and multiple niches.

1881 building, we munched on fabulous appetizers, sipped lovely wine, and took plenty of time to browse through the gallery of beautiful art tiles from all over the country. We watched Brigid demonstrate her slip-trail decorating technique as well. All of her tiles are designed with this lovely, old-style process also known as 'tube lining' that's similar to applying confections to a cake (and the finished tiles look equally delicious!). To top off our day Brigid & Eric hosted a full scale, fabulous dinner for our group in the middle of the store, sponsored by the **Tile Council**. Their neighbor, South Market Bistro, provided the delicious food.



**The gang's all here! The feast at Artfind.**



**Jim Fry explains that the heat does in fact rise!**

mechanized processes used to produce Seneca Satins. Probably the most exciting thing for all of us was observing the old beehive downdraft kilns in the kiln barn where from start to finish the firing process takes almost a week. Heat from these kilns is routed to dry the wares before firing and the kiln barn also accommodates sorting and packing the fired wares. It is a wonderful place. As we were so far out in the country, Jim and Connie graciously hosted us to a lovely luncheon in their showroom where we could admire the multiple ways that the different Seneca and Epro tile lines and color ways come together in pleasing palettes in the same manner as they are found in the many tile showrooms across the country. See [www.senecatiles.com](http://www.senecatiles.com) and [www.eprotile.com](http://www.eprotile.com).

### **Seneca: Having Cake and Eating it too!**

On Friday the 19th, the last day of our tour, we headed out early for the long ride west through the harvested cornfields to Seneca Tiles in Attica, Ohio where our hosts, Connie and Jim Fry, first gave us a run down on the history of their company. They produce a wide variety of handmade tiles, both Seneca and Epro tiles, and also import and distribute Italian porcelain tiles and a lovely glass mosaic. Seneca is the largest producer of authentically handmade tiles in the United States, a recognized leader in manufacturing rustic, glazed tiles and unglazed paver tiles.

We toured the plant from top to bottom, enjoying all of the processes and observing how the different tile lines are produced, from soft clay pressed by hand into old-style, wooden molds to some of the more sophisticated and



**Yes, we got the cake and ate it too. Thanks Connie!**

mechanized processes used to produce Seneca Satins. Probably the most exciting thing for all of us was observing the old beehive downdraft kilns in the kiln barn where from start to finish the firing process takes almost a week. Heat from these kilns is routed to dry the wares before firing and the kiln barn also accommodates sorting and packing the fired wares. It is a wonderful place. As we were so far out in the country, Jim and Connie graciously hosted us to a lovely luncheon in their showroom where we could admire the multiple ways that the different Seneca and Epro tile lines and color ways come together in pleasing palettes in the same manner as they are found in the many tile showrooms across the country. See [www.senecatiles.com](http://www.senecatiles.com) and [www.eprotile.com](http://www.eprotile.com).



Moravian tiles adorn two fireplaces in this home on Center Street

## Historic Ashland

It was then time to head east again to Ashland, our last stop of the day. Here, tile enthusiast Dotty Tennis had arranged a walking tour through historic homes on or adjacent to Center Street. Several of the homes, built in the early years of the 20th century, had magnificent Moravian tile mantels—I think we saw five different configurations in all! Dotty then hosted us to tea and cakes at her own home where we saw several examples of rare Unitiles from Uhrichsville installed in the stucco and brick. Ashland, a town of some 21,000 people, certainly lived up to its name as “The World Headquarters of Nice People.”

When you're into tiles, you can never say goodbye to Ohio, the cradle of tile manufacturing in the U.S. There is always

more to see—even where you've already been—and we'd like to thank our hosts for making this a most memorable week for all of us, one where we learned so much and yet were able to share our own knowledge and as we honed our expertise.

Sheila Menzies



Unitiles were produced by the Donahey brothers in Uhrichsville, Ohio from 1917 to 1927

## Call for Entries: Spectrum and Prism Awards presented by Coverings

Deadline: February 1, 2008. For details, [Click Here](#)



## Call for Entries: Friends of K-12 Clay

**Friends of K-12clay** website, [www.k12clay.org](http://www.k12clay.org), is now open for the 2008 **Call for Entries**. Closing deadline is **January 9, 2008**. All information needed for submitting entries to the 2008 juror, Richard Burkett, is on the website. All ceramic teachers are encouraged to send in entries, spread the word via state art organizations, vendors, teachers groups, word of mouth, and any other means. The organization is celebrating the end of its 10th anniversary year and its \$10,000 matching grant (which is still operating and still matching all donations!). The hope is for the best and largest show ever in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at the 2008 NCECA Conference, March 19-22. The National K-12 Ceramic Exhibition Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization.

## Call for Entries: National Ceramic Competition

In April 2008 [The San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts](#) will host its **17th National Ceramic Competition**, continuing a tradition of support and recognition of contemporary ceramic arts. The first competition was held in 1986. It remained an annual exhibit through 1996, when, due to its growing size and popularity, the museum changed the competition to a biennial event.

Far more than an exhibit, the April ceramics show is a 3-day event which is jointly hosted by the museum, [Angelo State University](#) and [The Old Chicken Farm Art Center](#). The museum's opening reception of the ceramics exhibit is one of the highlights and is accompanied by a ceramic symposium at the university and a day long workshop at The Old Chicken Farm Art Center. There are numerous other gallery openings, a barbecue dinner, and 3 days of ceramic discussions.

For each competition the museum chooses a well known and qualified juror within the ceramic community to curate the show. This year the juror is **Anna Stanfield Harris, Curator, Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art, Biloxi, Mississippi**. An exhibit of over 100 pieces, covering a wide spectrum of styles across the United States, Canada and Mexico, is chosen from often over 1500 entries. Prizes include the **Tile Heritage Prix Primo** that awards \$750 to the tile maker whose tile in the juror's estimation best reflects the ceramic traditions of North America.

Click here for the [Call for Entries](#). **Deadline: February 4, 2008.**

